

DISPOSABLE GLOVE FOR A GLOVE DONNING SYSTEM

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation of U.S. Patent
5 Application No. 10/328,645 entitled "Disposable Glove for a
Glove Donning System" filed December 23, 2002, now U.S.
Patent No. 6,708,840 issued March 23, 2004, which is a
continuation of U.S. Patent Application No. 09/865,788
entitled "Disposable Glove Donning System" filed May 25,
10 2001, now U.S. Patent No. 6,497,340, which is a
continuation-in-part of U.S. Patent Application No.
09/478,654 filed January 6, 2000, now abandoned, the entire
contents of all three of which are fully incorporated by
reference herein. This application contains subject matter
15 related to the subject matter disclosed in U.S. Patent
Application No. 09/934,110 entitled "Glove Cartridge and
Method of Donning a Disposable Glove" filed August 21,
2001, now U.S. Patent No. 6,578,729 issued June 17, 2003.

20 FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to disposable gloves for
a glove system, and particularly to easily donned
disposable gloves that can be mounted on and donned off a
glove rack.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Disposable gloves are mandatory equipment in many
industries that require clean and/or sterile environments,
e.g., the foodservice industry. The use of disposable
30 gloves reduces the spread of viruses and other contaminants
among individuals. In the foodservice industry, such
contaminants are less likely to be transmitted from

employees to food when employees regularly wear gloves, when employees frequently and regularly replace used gloves with new ones, and when gloves require little handling to be donned.

5 Many types of disposable gloves are known to and used by the foodservice industry. One type comprises two superimposed layers of thermoplastic film sealed together along their peripheries, leaving an opening for a hand to be inserted between the two layers. A two-layered
10 disposable mitt is shown in Grinberg U.S. Pat. No. 5,806,099, and a method of forming such a mitt is shown in Bradfield U.S. Pat. No. 4,928,322. (It is intended that the word 'glove' include both multi-finger mitts and five-finger gloves.)

15 Disposable gloves are generally sold in stacked units containing a supply of gloves layered one on top of the other. Gloves may be sold in a dispenser, such as a paperboard box, which encloses the stack and from which gloves may be removed one at a time. (A glove is typically
20 removed in the manner that a paper tissue is removed from a tissue dispenser.) A box dispenser thus provides a simple and economical means for protecting the stored gloves from contamination and for dispensing the gloves. Variations of box dispensers for disposable gloves are shown in
25 McLaughlin U.S. Pat. No. 4,844,293 and Hoffrichter U.S. Pat. No. 5,655,682.

Box dispensers also have several drawbacks. For example, a disposable glove is often difficult to don after removing it from a box dispenser. Upon being dispensed, the
30 glove may have creases and/or be folded, requiring a user to straighten it out before donning it. A user may have difficulty first finding and then separating the glove

opening into which the hand is inserted. Therefore additional dispensing configurations have also been developed. One such configuration comprises a stack (or `saddle`) of disposable gloves held together by a heat-
5 fused detachable portion of the gloves, which portion may be covered by a flap as shown in Klecena U.S. Pat. No. 5,966,741. The gloves advantageously remain flat as they are removed from the detachable portion, in order to facilitate the process of donning them after they are
10 removed. However, as is the case with the box dispensers, a glove must first be removed from the stack before it is donned.

It is an object of the present invention to provide an improved configuration for a disposable glove system
15 whereby a disposable glove may be donned more easily and quickly than heretofore. The new and improved system of the present invention is especially valuable in the foodservice industry, where efficiencies in the nature of time-saving and in the ease and simplicity of donning the gloves result
20 in significantly increased productivity and enhanced hygiene. It is a further object of the invention to provide a disposable glove rack from which a glove can be removed and donned more easily, more quickly, and more safely, in order to encourage the frequent and regular replacement of
25 used gloves with new ones.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In an exemplary embodiment according to the present invention, a disposable glove for a glove donning system is
30 provided. The disposable glove comprises a first layer; and a second layer superimposing a region of the first layer, said first and second layers being joined together

along their peripheries to form an abutted portion and an opening for inserting a hand between the first and second layers, wherein the first layer of the glove has a mounting section having a mounting hole and a line of weakness
5 extending between the mounting hole and a rear edge of the mounting section; said mounting hole for mounting the glove on fastening means of a glove rack, wherein the glove is mounted on the glove rack by inserting the fastening means into the mounting hole of the glove, and wherein the glove
10 on the glove rack can be taken off the glove rack by inserting a hand into the glove and applying a force to the glove in a direction of donning.

In another exemplary embodiment according to the present invention, a disposable glove for a glove donning
15 system is provided. The disposable glove comprises a first layer; and a second layer overlaying a region of the first layer, said first and second layers being joined together along their peripheries to form an abutted portion and an opening for inserting a hand between the first and second
20 layers, wherein the first layer of the glove has a mounting section attached to the rest of the first layer by a transverse line of weakness, the mounting section having a mounting hole for mounting the glove on fastening means of a glove rack, wherein the glove is mounted on the glove
25 rack by inserting the fastening means into the mounting hole of the glove, wherein the mounting section can be separated from the rest of the glove at the transverse line of weakness by inserting a hand of a user into the glove and applying a force to the glove in a direction of
30 donning, and wherein first and second layers are fabricated from a material having little elasticity, thereby causing the opening to open with little effort by the user.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a top plan view of a glove of the present invention.

5 FIG. 2 is a cross-sectional view of the glove of FIG. 1, taken along line 2-2 of FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is an exploded perspective view of an embodiment of a disposable glove system having a stacked unit of gloves and a first embodiment of a glove rack.

10 FIG. 4 is an exploded perspective view of a preferred embodiment of the disposable glove system of the present invention having a stacked unit of gloves and a second embodiment of a glove rack.

FIG. 5 is a perspective view of the embodiment of FIG. 4, showing the path of a glove being donned and removed from the glove rack.

FIG. 6 is a perspective view of an alternate preferred embodiment of the glove rack of the present invention.

20 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

As shown in FIGS. 1 and 2, a glove 10 of the present invention has a top thermoplastic layer 12 and a bottom thermoplastic layer 14. The top layer 12 is advantageously shorter than the bottom layer 14 to provide a bare inner surface 15 of the bottom layer 14 along which a hand may be
25 slid easily into a glove opening 20. The two layers are superimposed and are preferably fabricated from tear-resistant plastic film, such as polyethylene film. The top and bottom layers 12, 14 are joined together along their
30 peripheries 16, 17 (respectively) to form an abutted portion 18, and the layers in the wrist region of the glove are not joined together in order to provide a glove opening

20 where the fingers of a hand are inserted between the layers 12, 14. The top and bottom layers may be joined by heat welding or a similar process.

The glove opening 20 is designed to allow the entire
5 hand to be inserted quickly and easily between the two layers of plastic film. In particular, an extended region 19 of the bottom layer 14 is not overlaid by the top layer 12, providing the bare inner surface 15 of the bottom layer 14 for permitting the easy donning of a glove. Moreover,
10 each plastic layer is preferably fabricated from a material having little elasticity, such as polyethylene, causing the glove opening 20 to open immediately with little effort by a user upon donning the glove. The top 12 and bottom 14 layers of the glove are preferably shaped to form a
15 separate pocket for each finger, where each pocket is sufficiently large to permit a finger to be slid easily thereinto. Alternately, the glove may be shaped to form a mitt having a thumb region and a separate pocket for covering all other fingers.

20 The bottom layer 14 of the glove has a mounting section 28 attached to its extended region 19 by a transversely oriented line of weakness 33, i.e., a perforated line in the plastic film substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis 29 of the glove. The
25 mounting section 28 is preferably integrally formed with the bottom layer 14. The mounting section 28 includes at least one hole 32 (or "key-hole 32") for receiving an arm or other type of fastener of a glove rack. The mounting section 28 preferably has two key-holes 32, wherein each
30 keyhole is positioned approximately 1 inch from the rearmost edge 21 of the mounting section and approximately

1 inch from the respective side edge 22, 23 of the mounting section.

An embodiment of a disposable glove system, including a stacked unit of gloves 30 and a flat glove rack that rests on top of a substantially horizontal surface, is shown in FIG. 3. The stacked unit of gloves may comprise an integral stack of individual gloves heat welded together in one or more regions of their mounting sections 28, e.g., by hot-punches which create small holes 26 through the mounting sections 28. Alternately, the individual gloves may be fastened to each other by tie straps extending through their mounting holes, which tie straps may also be fastened to a flat section of paperboard immediately beneath the stacked unit of gloves in order to hold the gloves securely thereto. The tie straps may be removed, and the gloves separated from the paperboard, before mounting the gloves to a glove rack. Any number of gloves, between roughly ten and two-hundred, may be included in a stacked unit. A stacked unit generally has a narrow region proximate the mounting sections 28 of the gloves 10 because the mounting section of each glove comprises a single layer of plastic film, in contrast to the dual layers of the hand portion.

The glove rack 37 in FIG. 3 comprises a support structure 38 with at least one fastener 40 mounted thereto (two fasteners shown). The fasteners 40 may be in the form of straight wicket posts 44, or arms, affixed to a flat surface 39 of the support structure 38, which surface also provides the mounting surface 42 for the gloves. It is intended that other types of fasteners can also be used. The gloves 10 are mounted to the glove rack 37 by directing the fasteners 40 through the key-holes 32 of the mounting

section 28 of the stacked unit of gloves 30 and then laying the gloves on top of the mounting surface 42 of the rack.

The mounting section of a glove may have longitudinal lines of weakness 34 extending from each mounting hole 32 to the rearmost edge 21 of the mounting section 28. Such lines of weakness, substantially parallel to the longitudinal axis of the glove 10, provide an alternate means for removing a glove from the glove rack. Longitudinal lines of weakness 34 replace the single transverse line of weakness (reference numeral 33 in FIG. 1), thus eliminating any residual mounting portion that might otherwise remain on the glove rack after a glove is removed.

As shown in FIGS. 4 and 5, the preferred dispensing system of the present invention includes a stacked unit of gloves 30 mounted on a glove rack 50 specially configured for dispensing the gloves quickly, safely, and easily. The glove rack has a top mounting surface 52, a bottom surface 54, a front surface 56, and a rear surface 58. The front surface 56 has two fasteners 60 protruding therefrom. The fasteners 60 preferably comprise J-shaped arms 62 which point toward the bottom surface 54 of the glove rack. The two fasteners shown may be joined to each other by an intermediate member 57 (shown in phantom) to provide a single C-shaped structure that may be easily mounted to the front surface 56, e.g., by an adhesive. The gloves 10 are mounted to the glove rack 50 by directing the fasteners 60 through the mounting holes 32 of the mounting sections 28 of the gloves 10. The gloves are then draped over the top surface 54 of the glove rack.

As an important aspect of the preferred embodiment of a glove rack of the present invention, the J-shaped

fasteners 62 are positioned on the front surface 56 of the glove rack 50, instead of on the glove mounting surface 52, to allow the safe and easy donning of a glove. To don a glove, a user inserts a hand into the opening 20 of the top glove--advantageously while the glove is attached to the glove rack--and urges the glove forward toward the abutted (finger) portion 18 of the glove. Fasteners mounted on the top mounting surface of a glove rack may otherwise interfere with and/or injure the hand or the wrist while donning a glove. In contrast, the front-mounted fasteners 62 point forward and downward in order to avoid the hand or wrist entirely as the top glove is donned. Therefore, in the preferred glove rack, there are no encumbrances that interfere with the hand or wrist of a user, as there are in the embodiment of FIG. 3. Once a hand is safely inside the glove, the sliding motion by the hand causes the transverse line of weakness 33 to separate, releasing the glove from the glove rack.

As shown in FIG. 6, an alternate preferred embodiment 80 of the glove rack has additional advantageous features. The top surface 54 is between 1 and 3 inches above the bottom surface, and the width 59 of the front surface 56 is preferably greater than that of the rear surface 58. Thus the top mounting surface is angularly displaced from the front surface of the rack by an obtuse angle, providing a more ergonomic design whereby the path of donning the glove points downward to permit a hand to slide more easily into the glove. Because the top surface is elevated, one's fingers do not hit the surface on top which the glove rack rests as a glove is donned. The glove rack is preferably composed of a material that is portable yet sufficiently heavy to prevent the rack from moving as a glove is donned

and removed, such as a metal or a rigid plastic. The glove rack may also have rubber feet (not shown) mounted on its bottom surface in order to grip a surface more securely, and may have permanent securing means for securing the glove rack permanently to a horizontal or vertical surface. Plastic and/or rubber covers 65 may be attached to the fasteners for further reducing any possibility that a user might be injured by the glove rack. The glove rack advantageously has no side walls to permit simple and economical construction thereof.

The stacked unit of gloves also has several advantageous features. As shown in FIG. 5, the bend 70 in the gloves is preferably positioned above the edge 72 where the top mounting surface 52 and the front surface 56 of the glove rack intersect, causing the gloves to separate more easily from the rack because their tear lines (lines of weakness) are creased above the edge 72. The bend 70 also causes the glove opening of the top glove to spread apart slightly, thus increasing the ease of donning the gloves and eliminating the need to handle the gloves when donning them. The angular displacement between the front and top surfaces of the rack also relieves the region 75 of plastic film immediately surrounding the key-holes of each glove of magnified stress as the glove is removed, thus causing the glove to tear along its tear line and preventing the region 75 proximate the keyholes from otherwise ripping. The stacked unit of gloves may be sold either together with the glove rack or separately as a replacement saddle of gloves.

Although the glove in FIG. 5 may be worn on either the right or left hand, it is more easily donned by the right hand. (The glove may also be donned by the left hand by rotating turning one's left hand palm-up while donning the

glove.) A stacked unit of left-handed gloves that are the mirror image of the glove of FIG. 5, but otherwise identical, may also be manufactured to allow a user to don gloves onto both hands in the more ergonomic palm-down
5 manner.

It will be appreciated that, when longitudinal lines of weakness are used instead of a single transverse line of weakness, the entire glove 10 is released from the glove rack and no portion of the gloves 10 remains behind. Also,
10 it will be appreciated that the strength of the material forming the mounting section 28 and the reduction in such strength caused by the lines of weakness 34 can be adjusted to create an optimal design.

It should be understood, of course, that the specific
15 forms of the invention herein illustrated and described are intended to be representative only, as certain changes may be made therein without departing from the clear teachings of the disclosure. Accordingly, reference should be made to the following appended claims in determining the full scope
20 of the invention.